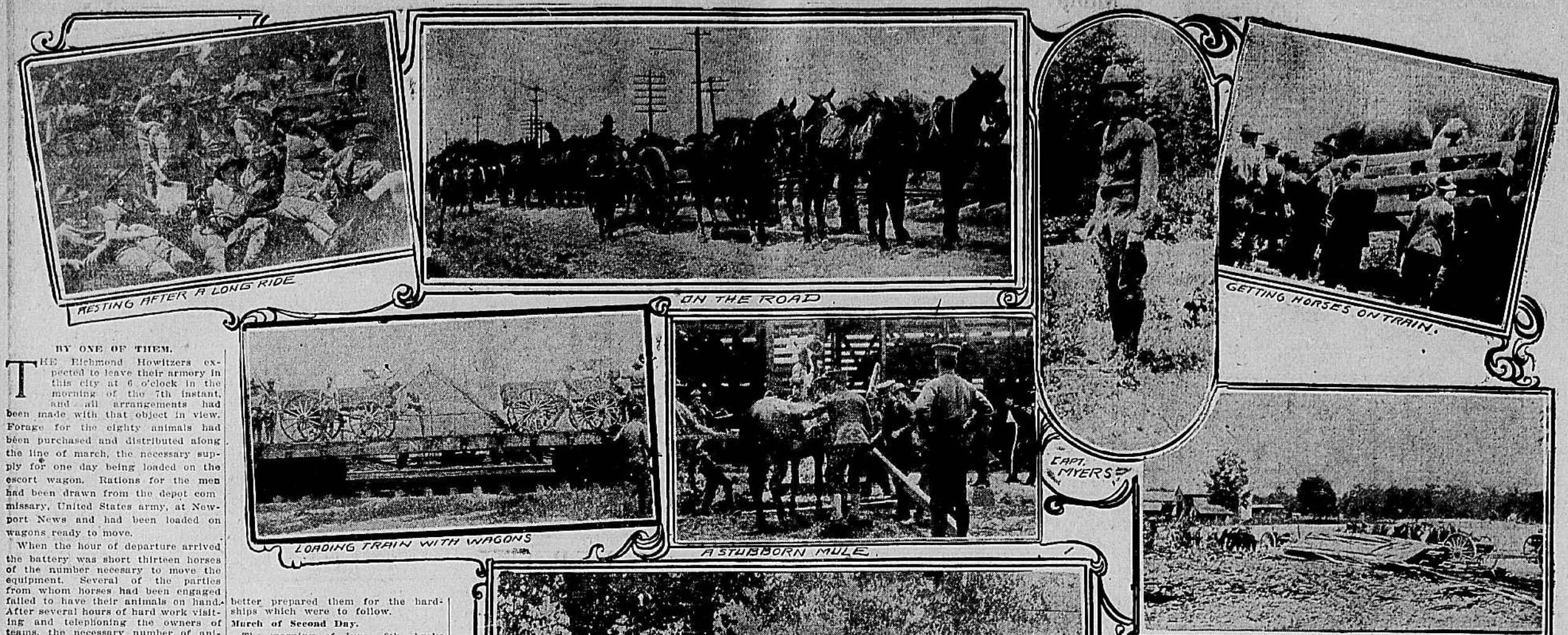


Story of Record-Breaking March of Richmond Howitzers to Exposition



BY ONE OF THEM.

THE Richmond Howitzers expected to leave their armory in this city at 6 o'clock in the morning of the 7th instant, and all arrangements had been made with that object in view. Forage for the eighty animals had been purchased and distributed along the line of march, the necessary supply for one day being loaded on the escort wagon. Rations for the men had been drawn from the depot commissary, United States army, at Newport News and had been loaded on wagons ready to move.

When the hour of departure arrived the battery was short thirteen horses of the number necessary to move the equipment. Several of the parties from whom horses had been engaged failed to have their animals on hand. After several hours of hard work visiting and telephoning the owners of teams, the necessary number of animals to draw the equipment were secured, and the march from the armory began at 12 o'clock M. The march through the city was along Eighth Street to Main, to Ninth, and across the Free Bridge to Manchester. The streets were thronged with the friends of the Howitzers, and many were the cheers and good wishes hurled to the cannoneers.

Thought They Were Going to Fight Japs.

At Manchester several of the animals had cast their shoes in the March from Richmond, and a delay was necessitated in order that these horses be shod, the battery moving out from that city at 1:45 o'clock.

The entire population of Manchester turned out to see the Richmond artillerymen, and many were the amusing incidents, some even expressing themselves that the United States was about to be involved in war with Japan, and that the Howitzers were a portion of the regular army on the march to the Orient; while others felt quite sure that it was a "show," which would give a performance later in the evening. One individual, thinking that the civil authorities had held the party up for its failure to secure license, approached Captain T. M. Wortham, the adjutant of the battalion, who was at the head of the column, and asked if that was not the cause of the halt.

Out of Manchester into the country roads the realization of the month's anticipation was at hand. With each mile covered the animals became more accustomed to their work, and soon settled down to it as if they had been worked together for years, while the fact was that very few of the horses had ever been hitched together before. The march was continued over newly-worked roads, heavy with mud, without incident to Broad Rock Branch, a distance of eight miles from Richmond. At this point a stop of thirty-five minutes was made in order that the teams might be watered, the march being resumed at 4:05 o'clock and continued to a point where the narrow gauge road crosses the county road, a distance of twelve miles from Richmond.

First Night in Camp.

This point was reached at 7 o'clock in the evening in a drizzling rain. As the teams had done good work for the first half day, Captain Myers decided to go into camp for the night.

The battery was parked on the right of the road in the angle formed by the railroad and the county road crossing. The teams were unhitched and unharnessed, the work's horses were soon alighted, and shelter tents were pitched for the night. The bugles sounded the calls for water, stables and feed, the horses were ordered fed and groomed for the night, guard fire mounted and the bugle call which every one recognizes, is heard. There were no questions asked as to the meaning of the call; the men knew it was the mess call, and each individual lined up at the cook's fires to receive his first night's supper in camp. Each received his allowance, and with their mess pans full and a large tin cup of coffee, the men ate in true army style around a large camp fire, with the rain pouring on their backs, making it easier to chew. At 10:45 tattoo rang out, and fifteen minutes later taps. The camp was soon in darkness, no lights except the camp fire, which glowed in the distance. The men and horses had done a day's work, and settled down to a night's sleep. A severe thunder-storm broke over the camp about 2 o'clock in the morning, and this gave the men in their shelter tents, and the guards on their posts a slight wetting, and a bit of real campaign experience, and

better prepared them for the hardships which were to follow.

March of Second Day.

The morning of June 8th broke clear. Réveille at 5, roll-call at 5:15, stables 5:30, mess 6 and boots and saddles at 6:30. Camp was struck, and the march of the second day was begun at 7:30 o'clock. The weather outlook was fine, but the roads were heavy with mud from the rain of the night before. Kingsland Creek was reached at 8:30, where the teams were watered, and the march resumed at 9:45, and continued to Petersburg, which point was reached at 12:30.

At this point additional forage for the animals was loaded on 80 escort wagons, and an effort made to secure four extra horses, the battery having been compelled to leave Richmond with just enough animals to draw the equipment, and no extra horses to put on in case of accident. No horses could be secured in Petersburg, but, after some delay, four mules were hired which gave Captain Myers four extra animals in case of accident to any of his teams during the long march to the exposition.

The Howitzers moved through Petersburg, passing along Old Street to Sycamore, to Wythe, where the teams were fed, and the men given their midday meal. The streets were thronged with people, and a right royal welcome the Richmond boys received. While at lunch refreshments were served to the men by many of the residents of the Cockade City; so hospitable were they that the boys were sorry when the bugle sound of "Forward March" was heard.

At 2:40 the signal to start was given, and the battery moved out Wythe Street, passing the historic Old Blanford Church, through the battlefields of the Crater. Over forty years had elapsed, but the old residents along the road were cheered by a sight which they had not witnessed since the Civil War. It was plainly apparent that the sight which the Howitzers presented carried them back to the fields of glory, and that trying period when the fields through which the battery was passing was strewn with the dead of the flower of our country.

Battery Held Up.

About six miles from Petersburg the column was "held up." Captain Myers was approached by a "prosperous-looking farmer and requested to halt the battery.

The request was complied with, and the bugle sound of "halt," and what next; well, the gentleman introduced himself as Mr. Burr; said that he had relatives who served in the Howitzer Battery during the Civil War, that he had heard the Howitzers were to pass his farm, and that just to show how he felt, he desired the halt ordered so that each man of the battery could drink all the butter and sweet milk he was capable of from the large vessels he pointed out to the captain just within his gate. The men were assembled at the gate, the milk was finished, and with three cheers for Mr. Burr, the Howitzers moved on. Bates Station was reached at 8 o'clock, where a rest of fifteen minutes was had. The march continued to a small ford one mile north of Disputanta, where the animals were watered at 7:45 o'clock in the evening. At 8:20 o'clock the march was resumed to Disputanta, at which point the battery arrived at 8:55 o'clock having covered a distance of twenty-six miles during the day.

The battery was parked for the night in a large grove of oaks. Broom-straw waist-high and much shrubbery covered the ground. The night was very dark, and the formation of the pieces in the park would have been a credit to the regular artillery of the army.

This was the first attempt of the Howitzers to go into park in the darkness of the night. It was a novel and pretty sight, though somewhat weird and ghostlike. In the darkness of the night Captain Myers was seen to gallop off with a lantern in hand, and was here, there and everywhere, examining the condition of the ground over which he was about to order the battery. This being done, the bugle rang out the signal to form park to the left, and then were seen four more lanterns to come into the darkness, each held by a chief of section mounted on horseback, guiding his carriages through the darkness to their position in the park.

When the last of the four lights had arrived at its position, the bugle told the drivers and cannoneers to dismount, unhitch and unharness their teams. The cooks then lighted their fires, and in a few moments were hard at work preparing supper for the outfit. Soon fires were seen at several places about the camp. The dray and longhouse of but a few moments ago was ablaze with light, and one hundred men were moving here and there, discharging their duties. The horses being fed and groomed, lights were pitched, and the lonely spot of a few moments ago became a tented city of over a hundred souls.

Soon the call to mess was heard, and the men assembled at the kitchen

fires. After eating they amused the inhabitants of the town, who had assembled at the camp, until 11 o'clock, when taps put the camp to sleep. The formation of the park and the manner in which the men discharged their duties in the darkness of the night would have reflected credit upon a battery of the United States artillery.

Wagons Stalled in Mud.

After the night's rest at Disputanta revellie was sounded at 5 o'clock, roll-call at 5:15, stables at 5:30, mess 6, boots and saddles 6:30, and just at 7 o'clock the bugle told that the battery was off for another day on the road. At a small ford one mile east of Disputanta a halt of thirty minutes was made, and the teams watered. The march was continued without incident of note to Waverly, which was reached at 12:15 o'clock noon. At this place the Howitzers camped and parked their guns upon the beautiful lawn of Mr. Peter Fleetwood, who had several of the officers to dine with him, and he, with his charming wife and daughter, were untiring in their efforts to see that the Howitzers enjoyed their stay in his town.

At this place the horses were fed, the men served dinner, and forage for the animals drawn from the Norfolk and Western depot and packed on the wagon. It being Sunday, the entire population of the town turned out to greet the Richmond artillerymen. Many were the compliments paid the organization by the good people of this town. The battery resumed the march at 2:35 o'clock, among the cheers and good wishes of the many friends they had made in so short a stay, about four miles from Waverly the escort wagons became stalled in the heavy mud, causing a delay of fifteen minutes. The march was continued over heavy roads, with mud in some places eighteen inches to two feet deep, arriving at Wakefield at 6:30 o'clock in the evening.

About two miles from this city the Howitzers were met by a mounted escort, who presented the compliments of the citizens, both male and female, and expressed the wish that the battery camp in town that night. Captain Myers expressed his regrets, and stated that he wished time would permit.

The committee then asked that the battery parade through the town, stating that the ladies had prepared refreshments, and desired that the Howitzers stop and enjoy them. This the captain promised should be done.

Flowers for Officers.

At the town limits the Howitzers were met by as pretty a lot of young women as were seen on the trip, and this was saying in quite a good deal. These fair ones escorted the gallant Richmond soldiery to the main street of the town, and here presented to Captain Myers and Captain Wortham, who rode at the head of the column, magnificent bouquets of roses. The signal to halt rang out, the drivers and cannoneers were dismounted, and were served with delicious lemonade and refreshments by the fair daughters of the hospitable town of Wakefield.

Taps soon put the camp to sleep, and many were the dreams of the lake of Dismal Swamp that night. The guard, on his quiet and lonely post, was startled more than once by the sudden cry of some cannoneer, who had a nightmare and was fighting bears and wild animals out of his tent.

Record-Breaking Day.

The men all turned in knowing the next day would be a record. Orders had been issued for the guards to feed the animals at 2:45 A. M., revellie to be at 3, roll-call 3:15, stables

2:30, mess 4, boots and saddles 4:30, and promptly at 5 o'clock the battery moved out of camp. The route carried the battery for about one hundred yards over the mill dam, which was but little wider than the carriages and wagons, thence through the swamp for a mile or more over roads along which it looked impossible to move the column, but the drivers put to practical use their experience of the past two days, and the long line of carriages, guns and wagons marched from the swamp without mishap.

The column arrived at Ivor at 7:30 o'clock. At this place a stop of thirty minutes was made, and meat and other supplies were purchased. It was here that the battery met Mr. Joe Davis, a war-time Howitzer, who saw that the commissary wagon had at supply of good things for the day's march. At 8 o'clock the bugle sound of "forward march" was heard, and the Howitzers passed out of the town. At a ford five miles from Ivor a halt of twenty-five minutes was made to water the teams. This point was reached at 9:15 o'clock, the column resuming its march at 9:45, and continuing on to Zuni, this point being reached at 11:10 o'clock. At this place forage was drawn from the railroad depot, and the cook set to work cooking the midday meal, which was served to the men at 12:30 o'clock noon.

The horses were fed, and the battery was ready to move at 1:15, but it was here that the first and only accident to the teams happened. One of the horses, which had been playing his tricks ever since the battery left Richmond, reared back this time too far, and fell over on the gun carriage, mixing up things considerably. None of the drivers or cannoneers were hurt, and the horse was but slightly injured. The delay in putting in another team and treating the wounded animal prevented the battery from leaving the point until 2:30, at which time the column moved eastward, the accident causing a delay of one hour and fifteen minutes.

Fate seemed to be against us this morning, for out of Zuni there are two roads leading to Windsor. The battery, being misinformed, took the most indirect one, and thus lost two miles. Rain soon began to fall, and the roads, already quite heavy, became perfect lakes of mud. At 5:25 o'clock the battery reached Windsor Station, where a halt of fifteen minutes was made. At 5:40 the march was resumed to a point two miles east of Windsor, where a halt of one hour and fifteen minutes was made, the teams being watered and the men and horses taking advantage of the rest. At 7:25 the column moved on, passing Providence Church at 8:25 o'clock, reaching Suffolk at 10:30, on the outskirts of which city camp was pitched.

Made Thirty-Eight Miles.

The battery moved in a hard rain the greater part of the day, over roads newly worked and heavy with mud and sand, the men wet to the skin, the animals also, and the march was of no value in keeping the men dry. Little did the men think when they settled down that night that they had possibly broken the world's record.

They knew that they and the horses had done more than a good day's work, and they also knew that Suffolk should be reached that night in order to make the march a success. The Howitzers marched this day, June 10th, thirty-eight miles, making a record heretofore unthought of.

With men taken out of their confining positions in offices and stores, accustomed only to city life, with horses unseasoned, and many of them unfit for artillery service, and with only four horses to the carriage, the army regulation being six, and with the severe roads and many other discouraging conditions, they established a new record for artillery marching, and exhibited to the world what Virginia soldiery was capable of accomplishing. During the entire day's

March, everything possible was done to lighten the work of the draft animals. There was hardly a man or an officer in the Howitzers' Battery who did not walk thirty-four of the thirty-eight miles covered, the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates all dismounting, and when one of the outfit became too tired to push on, he was put on one of the officers' or other saddle horses to rest up. No man rode that day on the guns or carriages. It was a jolly set, with every one determined to reach the desired point. Songs were sung during the entire march, each man infused with but one object in view, that of reaching Suffolk.

No captain ever had a more loyal set of men, and, as Captain Myers expressed it, a more determined set. Said he: "If any of the teams had given out, the men would have drawn the carriages and disabled teams to Suffolk."

Upon the sight of the electric lights of the town cheer after cheer rang out, and the entire outfit of men and horses looked as fresh as if the march had just begun. The battery was quickly parked on the left of the road in the only available spot near the city. The teams were unhitched and the horses were thoroughly groomed and fed, shelter tents were pitched and guard was mounted. Supper had been prepared, and the men ate in a heavy rain. Immediately after supper tattoo was heard, and ten minutes later taps told the tired cannoneers that the night's slumber was at hand.

Several of the battery had taken shelter for a night's rest in an old outhouse, the sawdust furnishing a dry bed. These found themselves securely nestled up in the morning. Sergeant Myers and several of the boys busied themselves during the night by playing the prank. The captain and several others sought rest upon the perch of a log hut, which relieved them of the mud bed, but gave no shelter from the rain.

Camp Submerged.

Just after 8 o'clock the camp was visited by one of the heaviest rains which had visited this section of the country for years. The camp was soon submerged, every tent was washed down, and Captain Myers was awakened by Sergeant Howsey, of the guard, and told of the condition. It was then just after 8 o'clock and the water was still falling in perfect sheets. The captain immediately gave orders for revellie to be sounded, and set out to relieve as much as possible the discomforts of his men. Captain Myers stated that upon inspecting the camp the night which he saw brought tears to his eyes, when he thought of how hard his men had worked the day before, and looked upon their condition at this time.

The camp resembled more a deserted battlefield than a camp. The men were lying in water from two to three feet deep, and were so sound asleep that they had no idea of their condition. The rain was so cold that when the men were aroused from their slumber and wet beds they shivered from the exposure. Soon the Suffolk camp was aroused, tents and equipment were gathered up, teams hitched in the darkness, and just as the dawn of day broke the battery moved into the town of Suffolk. There shelter from the cold, heavy rain was secured for the men and horses, and the battery decided to remain in Suffolk for several hours, which afforded shelter from the heavy rain, which was still falling. The battery, when at this point, secured forage from the depot for the last day of the march, and started out from Suffolk at 11:45 A. M., with not a dry piece of clothing or bed blanket in the outfit.

Stevens Station was passed at 12:50; Morris Fork at 2:50; Drivers at 3:58, where a stop of twenty-two minutes was made to water the teams. Sholders was passed at 4:30, and Hodgders Mill at 5:10, and the battery arrived at Portsmouth at 9:15 o'clock in the evening. The Howitzers passed

(Continued on Seventh Page.)

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